US Forest Service Northwest Montana
Backcountry Avalanche Advisory

For the Glacier Park and Flathead & Kootenai National Forest Areas

Avalanche advisory does not apply to developed ski areas

Issue Date:	**8:00 AM, Tuesday, March 06, 2012**
Valid Until:	Midnight, Tuesday, March 06, 2012
Next Update:	Friday, March 9, 2012
Issued by:	Tony Willits

This advisory is a product of the US Forest Service, US Dept. of Agriculture. Along with other snow and avalanche information, it is originally posted at http://www.fs.usda.gov/flathead. An audio summary is available via telephone at 406-257-8402

All Mountain Ranges

Avalanche Danger Summary

3 -Considerable : 5,000 to 7,500 ft. elevation, on steep, open slopes and gullies, with significant amounts of newly precipitated or wind deposited snow

2 - Mod : below 5,000

Avalanche Danger Trend

AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION

All Mountain Ranges - 5,000 to 7,500 ft. elevation

Danger Level	**3 - CONSIDERABLE**
Confidence	Fair
Travel Advice	• Dangerous avalanche conditions • Careful snowpack evaluation, cautious route-finding, and conservative decision-making essential
Likelihood of Avalanches	• Natural avalanche ***possible*** • Human triggered avalanches ***likely***
Avalanche Size & Distribution	• Small avalanches in many areas • Larger avalanches in specific areas • Very large avalanches in isolated areas

AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION

All Mountain Ranges **– below 5,000 ft. elevation**

Danger Level	**2 - MODERATE**
Confidence	Fair
Travel Advice	• Heightened avalanche conditions on steep, open slopes and gullies, particularly those that recently received significant new snowfall • Evaluate snow and terrain carefully
Likelihood of Avalanches	• Natural avalanche ***unlikely*** • Human triggered avalanches ***possible***
Avalanche Size & Distribution	• Small avalanches in specific areas • Larger avalanches in isolated areas

Because of the general nature of this advisory message, each backcountry party will always need to make their own time and site specific avalanche hazard evaluations. This advisory best describes conditions at the time of its issuance. As time passes avalanche and snow conditions may change, sometimes quite rapidly. Elevation and geographic distinctions used are approximate and transition zones between hazards exist.

Recent Mountain Weather

Summary	• Moderate to heavy snow fall across the region in the last 48 hours especially in the Kootenai and Southern Glacier National Park portions of the region
Precipitation	• The recent storm cycle entered with relatively warm temps and a higher density snow ○ Northern Swan and Missions had very light accumulations in the last 48 hours ○ East and West Cabinets had 1.4 to 2.4 inches of snow water equivalent (SWE); Southern Glacier National Park received 1.8 inches of SWE in the last 48 hours.
Temperature	• Daytime highs on Monday were at freezing or just above • Overnight temperatures have dropped into low twenties or upper teens
Wind	• Winds have been moderate with the incoming storm on Monday

Field Observation Locations

Monday, 3-05-12	• Cable Mountain East Cabinet Range 18 miles SE of Libby • Little Shields NE of Snowslip in GNP

Observer Report Locations

Monday, 3-05-12	• none

Avalanches Observed	• None observed on Monday, with poor visibility in AM fair visibility in late PM

Instability Concern / Avalanche Problem	*Level of Concern*	Most★★★ Less★★ Least ★
New Storm or Near Surface Snow	★★	• -Inverted snow pack with new snow that has a higher moisture content overlying a less dense snow pack • Heavy snow fall in the East and West Cabinets as well as Southern GNP
Wind Loading	★★	• -Wind transport was reduced by dense snow fall after Saturday coupled with a melt freeze crust overlying storm snow from Friday • -Pluming was occurring at upper elevation ridges on Monday with moderate SW winds
Recent or Persistent Buried Weak Layer	★★	• -Concern with the buried surface hoar and thin interface of faceted grains over melt-freeze ice crusts within the mid pack. - .
Spring Wet Snow or Melt-Freeze		
Rain-on-Snow		Rain on snow occurring at elevations below 5000 feet
Loose Snow		
Other Concerns		

Weather Forecast Current NWS Backcountry Forecast

Summary	•Snow levels will stay low through mid week but beginning Thursday high pressure will begin to build
Precipitation	• Predicted amounts today are light with no accumulations predicted from tonight through Thursday..
Temperature	•Temperatures remaining below the mid twenties through Wednesday night.
Wind	•Winds expected to be moderate through Wednesday. Wind direction will be out of the N today, SW tonight and W on Wednesday.

Avalanche Outlook

Trend	• Wednesday night through Thursday we expect the avalanche danger to trend downward with the introduction of predicted high pressure and increasing freezing levels.
Concern	• **The forecasted cooler temperatures today, tonight and with overnight clearing will start to temper near surface layers. This will not negate concern of artificial triggers on both convex & unsupported features, on slopes steep enough to avalanche** • **Until settlement and consolidation does occur within the snowpack the persistent weak layer of buried surface hoar does still exist and still be triggered and may not be mitigated with the coming high pressure. The only way to know is site specific pit investigations of areas that you are traveling or recreating upon.**
Comment	• ***ALWAYS carry and know how to use your avalanche safety equipment*** ○ ***Transceiver*** ○ ***Probe*** ○ ***Shovel*** ***(A lack of this equipment played in the recent fatal incidents)*** • ***Watch for any rapid changes in weather conditions beyond forecast amounts*** • ***Check out the site specific snow stability before jumping in or on any slope that has the potential to avalanche***